

Hamilton Field,
Company Officers' Quarters Type H2
(Facility Nos. 283, 286, 289)
Buena Vista
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-BN

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
IBN-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

**HAMILTON FIELD
Company Officers' Quarters, Type H2
(Facility Nos. 2B3, 2B6, 2B9)**

HABS
CAL
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HABS No. CA-239B-BN

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Company Officers' Quarters, Type H2
Facility Nos. 283 (283 Buena Vista), 286 (286 Buena Vista), and 289
(289 Buena Vista)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Military families

Present Use: Residential

Statement of Significance:

The Type H Company Officers' Quarters (COQ) are among the original residential units designed by the Constructing Quartermaster's Office at Hamilton Army Air Field. The quarters were equipped with all the modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of Erection:** COQ Type H2 houses were built at the same time. Facility Nos. 283, 286, and 289 were completed January 3, 1935 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
2. **Architect:** Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
3. **Original Owner:** Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The permanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
4. **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:** Construction of the COQ Type H houses was let in two contracts. Meyer Construction built Facility Nos. 283, 286, and 289 at a cost of \$10,020.62 each.
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals have not been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division in San Bruno, California, and can be accessed through the U. S. Navy. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the permanent housing, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, CA. Early views of the permanent

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housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, CA.

6. **Alterations/Additions:** Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. In 1962 the tile countertops and backsplashes in the kitchen were removed and replaced with post-formed plastic laminate. Kitchen floor coverings were replaced with vinyl asbestos tiles. A recessed light fixture was added over the sink at this time. Some interior fixtures in the remainder of the house have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures. Some porches were enclosed in 1934 and also in 1956.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churriguerresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equipped with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, and tiled bathrooms.

2. **Condition of fabric:** All of the permanent housing is in excellent condition. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since they took

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over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Company Officers' Quarters Type H2 dwellings were constructed in a rectangular plan, with a one-story mass. The front elevations feature recessed porches, decorative ceramic tile detailing on the entryways, arched windowheads, and circular vents with wrought iron grilles. They measure 60 feet wide by 30 feet deep. All have partially below grade basements.

2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measures two feet thick at the base and one foot thick above the basement floor.

3. Walls: Exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile brick. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of decorative four-inch ceramic tile surrounds on the entryways, projecting cast concrete window sills, an arched windowhead with decorative brickwork in a chevron pattern below (labeled on original plans as a Roman brick pattern), and a recessed bullseye window in the front gable with an exterior wrought iron grille.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced walls with wood-framed load-bearing interior walls. Reinforced concrete tie beams extend around the building. Roof systems consist of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each dwelling is recessed and accessed via a porch with a Mission tile shed-roof. Stairs are concrete with 12-inch square red quarry tile treads and risers and a portico floor; featured are terra cotta planter urns on the top steps. A few houses are at ground level elevation and are lacking porch stairs and urns. Porches with 12-inch square red quarry tile floors, turned wood balustrades, and Mission-tile shed roofs are located on the rear elevations of each building. All have been enclosed with modern windows. Cast concrete porticos with exterior stairways provide access to the kitchens on the rear elevations.

6. Chimneys: The homes feature exterior tapered rectangular stucco-clad brick chimneys on the side elevations. Cast iron cleanout doors and frames are located at the base of each chimney.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are accessed from the front porches; secondary doors are at the rear elevations. The primary door is solid core

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oak with multiple recessed panels in a geometric pattern; a leaded glass peep window and wrought iron grille are located on the upper portion. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with four lights originally made with wire plate glass over three recessed panels. Double French doors provide egress from the living rooms to the rear porches. Garage doors are the overhead segmented type with one row of lights above two rows of three recessed panels. The original garage doors were six vertical panels with wrought iron decorative grilles and swung outward on hinges.

b. **Windows/shutters:** Original windows were screened multi-paned metal casement or double hung sash; replacement windows are metal and glass, with multi-lights. There are two wrought iron grilles over the central front elevation narrow, rectangular windows.

8. Roof:

a. **Shape/covering:** The houses have low-pitched hipped and cross-gabled roofs. All are clad in terra cotta Mission tiles.

b. **Cornice/eaves:** Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles with metal gutters, downspouts, and scuppers. A cast concrete splash block is located under each downspout. The roofs have Mission tile ridges.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. **Basement:** Basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and interior stairways from the rear entries. Each floor plan is divided into a garage, boiler room and laundry room, and a maid's room and bath. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.

b. **First Floor:** The primary access to the homes is through an entry from the front portico to the living room and porch on one side, with two bedrooms and two baths in the front, separated by a hallway from the dining room, kitchen, and bedroom on the rear of the house.

2. Stairways: The COQ Type H2 housing units are served by an interior stairway from the rear entry to the basement. They have wood risers and treads and two- by four-inch wood railings on the interior walls.

3. Flooring: Flooring in the hallways, living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms is red oak. Flooring in the kitchens is Douglas fir covered with vinyl or asphalt tile added after 1961. The kitchen and pantry floors were originally covered with linoleum. The

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basement and garage have concrete floors, smooth finished. Flooring in the bathrooms is one- by one-inch, one- by two-inch, or one-inch hexagonal ceramic tile in a variety of two-tone color schemes, including cream/black, purple/lavender, white/black, and others. The exception is the maid's room, which has asphalt tile flooring. All bathrooms have marble thresholds.

4. **Wall/ceiling finish:** All rooms on the first and second floors have painted plaster walls and ceilings. Basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Bathroom walls are partially covered with four-inch ceramic tile, with baseboards and trim in a contrasting color.

5. **Openings:**

a. **Doorways/doors:** Rectangular archways provide access to the living rooms from the entries and the dining rooms. French doors access the dining rooms and the rear porches from the living rooms, and are also located between the dining rooms and rear hallways. All other doors are solid core wood with two recessed plywood panels. Doors between the kitchens and dining rooms are double action.

6. **Decorative features/trim:** Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Picture molding is located at the cornice level of the living rooms, dining rooms, hallways, and bedrooms. Each home has a living room fireplace constructed of cast concrete with concrete pilasters with chamfered posts supporting the mantel; decorative ceramic tiles surround the firebox. Hearths are six-inch square red quarry tile.

7. **Hardware:** The exterior door has a thumb latch lock. The interior door hardware consists of a decorative nickel-plated circular knob and escutcheon made by Corbin Company. The front door and French doors have hammered nickel-plated brass thumb latch handles. The cabinets in all rooms but the kitchen and pantry have porcelain or glass knobs. Door hinges are half-mortised. The original electric plates are plastic and extant in many of the units. Metal "Dixie" brand bells connected to the electric front doorbells are located in the kitchens.

8. **Mechanical equipment:**

a. **Heating:** Steam radiators made by American Radiator or Crane Radiator companies are located in each room and provide heating. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basement made by Ideal Gas Boiler Company or Bryant tubular Gas Boiler Company, Cleveland, Ohio. Some boilers have valves made in Germany in the early 1930s that are stamped with a swastika.

b. **Kitchen Appliances:** No original kitchen appliances were noted.

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c. **Ventilation:** Attic ventilation is provided by a bullseye window on the front gable. Basements are vented by hooded terra cotta Mission tiles vents.

d. **Lighting:** Houses have knob and tube wiring with circuit breakers. Dining room lighting included a wrought iron "Monterey" style fixture with five arms with candle lights, and two bronzed suspended wall sconces with candle lights. Hallway lighting consisted of a cast-metal canopy with six points. Bedroom fixtures consist of surface mounted cast metal double canopies with candle lights and wall sconces with candle lights. Original bathroom lights were ceramic wall sconces, flanking the medicine cabinets, and operated by pull chains. Not all lighting fixtures are extant in every unit. Some garages are now lit with fluorescent tubes.

e. **Plumbing:** An "Alberene Stone" double wash sink is located in each basement. Primary bathrooms feature "Standard" pedestal sinks, "Standard Madera," "Standard American," or "Crane" flush valve toilets, tubs with wall-mounted porcelain and metal "Crane" fixtures, and the original ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holders, and plastic-covered wood towel racks. The original mirrored metal medicine cabinets are located above the sinks. Some units have replacement sinks or faucets, but appear to be in original condition otherwise. Soap dishes, toothbrush holders, toilet paper holders, and towel bars in the maid's bathroom are chrome plated.

9. **Original Furnishings:** Built-in bookcases flank the central front living room windows. Telephone niches with a shelf and door are located in the hallways. Other built-ins include linen closets by the bathrooms, dressing room cabinets and drawers, and a china cabinet in the dining rooms. All have white glass or porcelain knobs and recessed wood panel doors. Built-in pull-down "Berklee" ironing boards, with two recessed wood panel doors, are located in the kitchens. The pantries feature original solid core wood panels and doors with recessed panels. Kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission style hammered metal hinges and latches and were added in 1955, replacing the original recessed panel cabinets. Original kitchen cabinets had tile counters and backsplashes; these have been replaced with formica counters.

D. Site:

1. **General site orientation:** The primary facades of the Company Officers' Quarters Type H2 face westerly and easterly toward Buena Vista Drive. Located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on the crest of a rolling hill, they are surrounded by other officers' quarters of like design. Of special note is the rock terracing in the yards.

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2. **Historic landscape design:** Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next and the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the Company Officers' permanent housing area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy popular for barrier plantings here, as in the NCO area. The Company Officers' private space was also delimited with California bigtree, silver poplar, coast redwood, white ironbark, black locust, Monterey pine, California fan palm, and Mexican fan palm. Compared to the NCO area the density and diversity of the plantings increased noticeably as one moved uphill.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. Exclusive to the Company Officers' housing area were Chinese photinia, strawberry tree, and citrus cultivars. During the primary occupation at Hamilton foundation shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-shaped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings have become quite large and overgrown and appear as accent plants.

Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast with the foundation plantings. In the front and back of the residences New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae are prominent. The most striking

difference between this housing area and the NCO area is the incorporation of accent plantings between houses. Several species were incorporated in this manner and not used elsewhere on base, although their use is generally limited to a single tree between houses. While the list of plants used for this purpose is long, representative species, include magnolia, avocado, cherry, weeping cypress, California peppertree, deodar cedar, and Norway spruce. The open space in the center of traffic circles in this area (North and South Circle) were planted with large and striking conifers, most prominently atlas cedar, deodar cedar, cost redwood, cypress, incense cedar, and California bigtree. Many of these were transported to base as mature trees, as per Nurses' orders.

In addition to the plantings around the Company Officers' housing, the outer margin of Perimeter Road (which rings the residential area) is bordered with a planting of northern California black walnut and Canary Island date palm. Occasional Canary Island pine and other upright conifers were added to the rears of the houses along the outer margins of the base.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-239B).

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II,
Office of Military History.

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Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California*. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas*. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

F. Supplemental Material:

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 283, 286, 289, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and

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appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

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8	" "	33 1/2
9	" "	35 1/2

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE CONSTRUCTING-QUARTERMASTER
HAMILTON FIELD, CALIF.
C. O. QUARTERS-TYPE "H-243"

C. O. QUARTERS-TYPE "H-243"

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